



Haryana Government's Response To Gender-Based Violence: A Literature Review

Simpal Sakalani, Dr. Bhavneet Bhatti
Research Scholar, Assistant Professor
School of Communication Studies
Panjab University, Chandigarh, India

Abstract: Gender-based violence remains a major cause for concern, with the United Nations including the ending of discrimination and elimination of violence against all women and girls everywhere as one of its Sustainable Development Goals. In India, the government has implemented the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao programme with the same intent. This paper discusses relevant literature describing the response of the Haryana Government to crisis arising from gender-based violence. Main themes include the definition of crisis, government initiatives to prevent, and responses to crisis arising out of gender-based violence. Literature reviewed included research studies and papers, books, and newspaper articles. The content of this paper is original and is related to the topic of the author's doctoral thesis.

Index Terms - gender-based violence, crisis communication, government communication, government crisis management, government public relations, public relations, Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence includes female infanticide, early and forced marriage, honor killings, child sex abuse and exploitation, domestic violence, and many other forms prevailing in society. The daily news reports of honor killings, rapes, and sexual harassment clearly demonstrate the rampant existence of gender-based violence. While gender-based violence is reported from all corners of the world every day, such acts may increase drastically during times of crisis.

According to the United Nations' 'Global Database on Violence Against Women,' as many as 29% of women in India aged between 15 and 49 years have experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime.

Governments in different countries have been implementing initiatives at different levels to prevent gender-based violence, besides enforcing punitive actions to discourage perpetrators. In India, the government has launched the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao initiative with the same intention.

The purpose for reviewing the literature is to find out if the initiative has so far been able to achieve its goals and to determine if the initiative has helped in decreasing crime against women. For this purpose, a literature review was carried out of research studies and papers, books, newspaper articles, and annual reports related to the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao initiative.

1.1 Crisis

Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (as cited in Hagen, 2014) defined crisis as "a specific, unexpected, non-routine event or series of events that creates high levels of uncertainty and a significant or perceived threat to high priority goals" (p. 7).

Coombs (2007) defined "crisis as the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization's performance and generate negative outcomes" (p. 3).

Crisis communication is a specialized component of public relations. Coombs (2010) defined "crisis communication as the collection, processing, and dissemination of information required addressing a crisis situation" (p. 20).

Coombs (2007) also defined "crisis management as a set of factors designed to combat crisis and to lessen the actual damages inflicted. Put another way, it seeks to prevent or lessen the negative outcomes of a crisis and thereby protect the organization, stakeholders and industry from harm" (p. 5).

According to India.com (2018), a married woman was allegedly raped by 40 men over four days in the Morni area of district Panchkula. The complainant stated that she was held captive at a guest house where the accused took turns to assault her. According to Sangwan (2018), the National Crime Records Bureau data for 2016 indicated that Haryana had acquired the top spot among all states in terms of gang rapes, with over 1,000 incidents of rape including 200 gang rapes registered in the state in the span of one year.

1.2 Gender-Based Violence

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), gender and violence have a complex relationship. The different roles and behaviors of men and women are shaped and reinforced in gender norms within society. Gender-based violence is a preventable and significant barrier to gender equality, yet it persists everywhere. Not only does it have long-lasting impacts on the physical and mental health of survivors, but it can also have long-term consequences for families, communities, and society as a whole.

Often inequalities in gender increase the risk of acts of violence by men against women. Most often, violence against women is perpetrated by an intimate partner, but it also takes many other forms such as violence by a family member, sexual harassment, trafficking for prostitution, child marriages, dowry-related violence, and honor killings.

According to the 2013 report of the World Health Organization (as cited in Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency [SIDA], 2015) on intimate partner violence and non-partner violence against women, nearly one-third of all women who have been in a relationship have experienced violence by their intimate partner, and about 38% of all murders of women are committed by intimate partners.

SIDA (2015) defines gender-based violence as "any harm or suffering that is perpetrated against a woman or girl, man or boy and that has a negative impact on the physical, sexual or psychological health, development or identity of a person. The cause of the violence is founded in gender-based power inequalities and gender-based discrimination" (p. 6).

1.3 Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Initiative

According to Haryana State Action Plan Sexual and Gender Based Violence (HSAPSGBV, n.d.), as per the Census 2011, for every 1,000 boys born, only 918 girls survive in India. This imbalance can lead to undesirable consequences. In order to ensure survival, protection, and empowerment of the girl child, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative from Panipat, Haryana, on January 22, 2015. The programme was initially launched in 100 districts with low Child Sex Ratio (CSR).

As mentioned in the Innovations under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (2019), the decline in CSR is a major indicator of women's disempowerment. The CSR reflects both pre-birth discrimination, manifested through gender-biased sex selection, and post-birth discrimination against girls. The BBBP initiative was launched to address the declining CSR and related issues of disempowerment of women. Since 2018–19, all 640 districts in the country have been covered under BBBP, of which 405 are covered under multi-sectoral intervention, media and advocacy, and 235 through alert media and advocacy outreach.

The programme has been implemented with the joint initiative of Union Ministries of Health and Family Welfare, Human Resource Development, and Women and Child Development.

1.3.1 Steps Taken by the Ministry of Women and Child Development

Steps undertaken include the registration of pregnancies in the first trimester in Anganwadi centres, community mobilization, and sensitization.

1.3.2 Steps Taken by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

Actions include strict monitoring of the implementation of the Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC&PNDT) Act, 1994 and Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971, increase in institutional deliveries, and registration of births.

1.3.3 Steps Taken by the Ministry of Human Resource Development

Steps include universal enrolment of girls, reducing dropout rate among girl students, enforcing the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, and creating functional toilets for girls.

1.4 Media Campaign

As per Press Trust of India (2019), since 2014, the Central government has spent Rs. 364 crore on advertising the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao mission. Expenditures included Rs. 18.91 crore in 2014–15, Rs. 24.54 crore in 2015–16, Rs. 29.79 crore in 2016–17, and Rs. 135.71 crore in 2017–18. The highest amount spent on advertising the campaign was Rs. 155.71 crore in 2018–19 until December 31, 2018.

Menon (2019) analyzed that the government had been spending more on publicity rather than on concrete interventions in the health and education sectors. More than 56% of the funds allocated under the programme were spent on media-related activities from 2014–15 to 2018–19. Only 25% of the funds were disbursed to the districts and states, and more than 19% of the funds were never released.

According to The Hindu (2021), the Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women noted in its report tabled in Lok Sabha that out of Rs. 446.72 crore released during 2016–19 under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, 78.91% was spent only on media advocacy. The Committee noted that despite clearly laid-down formulae for utilization of funds, massive amounts were spent on advertisements. As per the formula, Rs. 50 lakh per year was earmarked for a district for utilization in six different components: 6% for monitoring and evaluation, 8% as flexi funds, 10% for sectoral interventions in education, 10% for sectoral interventions in health, 16% for inter-sectoral consultation or capacity building, and 50% for innovation or awareness generation activities.

1.5 Innovative Interventions Under Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao

According to HSAPSGBV (n.d.), the government adopted a multi-sectoral approach under the BBBP programme to address the practice of gender-biased sex selection and create value for the girl child. 12 districts of Haryana were selected for multi-sectoral intervention, including Ambala, Bhiwani, Jhajjar, Kaithal, Karnal, Kurukshetra, Mahendragarh, Panipat, Rewari, Rohtak, Sonapat, and Yamunanagar.

In order to control and check violations of the PC&PNDT and MTP Acts, the Haryana Government conducted raids and inspected all ultrasound machines with the help of Chief Medical Officers and Deputy Commissioners.

The Apki Beti Humari Beti scheme has been an important initiative. Under this scheme, a sum of Rs. 21,000 is deposited in the bank account of the first-born girl child of families belonging to Scheduled Castes and those living below the poverty line. Similarly, Rs. 21,000 is deposited on the birth of a second girl child in all families. The Haryana Government extended the benefit to a third girl child effective August 24, 2015. Under the scheme, 1,24,046 beneficiaries have been covered, and a sum of Rs. 144 crore was provided in the budget for 2018–19, of which Rs. 51.07 crore was spent up to July 2018.

The Haryana Education Department initiated a campaign, *Betiyan Ka Salaam Rashtra Ke Naam*, under which the most educated girl in the village or ward is invited to unfurl the National Flag at all government schools on Independence Day. The Education Department also introduced the concept of *Tithi Bhojan* in schools, where birthdays of girl students are celebrated monthly by serving them a special mid-day meal.

The Government displayed the BBBP logo on all government buildings, public offices, official/public vehicles, public transport, and school buses. The traditional ceremonies of 'Thali Bajao' and 'Kua Pujan,' previously associated with the birth of boys, are now being celebrated for the birth of girl children, breaking gender stereotypes and challenging son-centric rituals.

With a view to enabling girls' education, the District Administration of Sirsa started a Career Counselling Guide initiative to guide girls in selecting career choices. District Administration Jhajjar launched UMANG – EK PAHAL to reduce dropout rates among girls in government schools by creating awareness regarding menstrual health and distributing free sanitary napkins.

As part of social activism, from the initiative's launch to November 2020, the state government organized 276532 awareness rallies, 648504 celebrations of the birth of girl children, 114965 nukkad nataks or folk arts, 31165 gudda-guddi boards displayed at Anganwadi Centres, 38838 film shows, 174879 prabhat pheries, 30919 puppet shows, 57930 signature campaigns, and 102669 health camps/baby shows and 16090 POCSO Awareness camps were organized. Directories of pregnant women were prepared, and bulk SMS were sent on health and nutrition issues (HSAPSGBV, n.d.).

1.6 Other Initiatives

According to Sanyal (2017), Haryana launched Operation Durga, which included Chief Minister's Flying Squads and Criminal Investigation Department (CID), aiming to stop the harassment of women in public spaces and ensure their safety. A Durga Shakti mobile application was also launched to enable women to seek immediate police help through women's helpline number 1091 in case of emergency (Tribune News Service, 2018).

According to Pioneer News Service (PNS, 2019), the government established Women Police Stations in all districts and increased the strength of women's police force in the state from 6% to 10%, with a proposal to further increase it to 20%. Women's colleges are being established at every 20 kilometers so that girls do not have to travel more than 10 kilometers to reach their colleges.

According to United News of India (UNI, 2018), the Chhatra Parivahan Suraksha Yojana was launched, providing free travel facilities to girl students in state roadways buses. Additionally, the Haryana government made provision for the death penalty for the rape of a minor girl below the age of 12 years, which was also adopted by the Central government (PNS, 2018).

As mentioned in HSAPSGBV (n.d.), One Stop Centres for Women were established to provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence—both in private and public spaces—under one roof, facilitating immediate, emergency, and non-emergency access to medical, legal, psychological, and counselling services. The Centres were established in districts Karnal, Gurugram, Faridabad, Hisar, Rewari, Bhiwani, and Narnaul.

Along with the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao initiative, the Prime Minister also launched the Sukanya Samridhi Account scheme to address gender imbalance in society and discrimination by creating a positive behavior in favor of the girl child. Under this scheme, a bank account can be opened from the birth of a girl child until she attains the age of 10 years, with a minimum investment of Rs. 1,000 and up to Rs. 1.5 lakh in a financial year.

1.7 Improvement in Sex Ratio

After the launch of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative, improvement in sex ratio was reported in Haryana. The Sex Ratio at Birth improved from 871 girls per 1,000 boys in 2014 to 923 in 2019, thereafter reducing to 916 in 2023 and 915 in 2025.

Institutional deliveries increased considerably from 35.7% in the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) in 2005–06 to 94.9% in NFHS-5 (2019–21). Similarly, ANC registrations rose from 51.4% in NFHS-3 to 85.2% in NFHS-5. Gradual increase was also noticed in enrolment of girls in Secondary Education, from 385,624 in 2015–16 to 400,736 in 2023–24.

Haryana was awarded the Nari Shakti Puraskar by the Central government at Rashtrapati Bhawan on March 8, 2016, in recognition of the state's success in improving the female sex ratio at birth. District Yamunanagar was conferred an honor for exemplary performance in the field of girl education on National Girl Child Day on January 1, 2017. Additionally, the Deputy Commissioner of Sonapat was honored by the Prime Minister for implementation of the PC&PNDT Act on the occasion of the third anniversary of Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao on March 8, 2018, at Jhunjunu, Rajasthan (HSAPSGBV, n.d.).

According to PNS (2019), Haryana won four awards, including one state-level and three district-level awards for better performance under BBBP on National Girl Child Day on January 24, 2019. The three districts were Jhajjar, Kurukshetra, and Karnal. At the state level, Haryana was selected for 'overall support, guidance, monitoring and achieving the targets of BBBP.' Jhajjar was recognized in the category 'Enabling Girl Child Education,' Kurukshetra in 'Enforcement of Pre-Conception and Pre Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act,' and Karnal in 'Effective Community Engagement.'

1.8 Violence Continues

According to Indiatimes (2018), a woman constable of Haryana Police was gang-raped inside an all-women police station in Palwal, Faridabad. The victim alleged that two accused raped her inside the police station at knife-point and threatened to kill her if she told anyone. The victim knew the main accused for the past four years, and he had reportedly been assaulting her for those four years (News 18, as cited in Indiatimes, 2018).

According to Indiatimes (2018), even after significant steps taken by the Haryana government for the safety of women, statistics presented in the winter session of the Haryana Vidhan Sabha showed that Gurugram and Faridabad were among the top regions in terms of overall crime against women in the state. As many as 3,768 and 3,440 cases of sexual assault were recorded from August 2014 to September 2018

in Gurugram and Faridabad, respectively. Similarly, 555 cases of rape in Gurugram and 352 in Faridabad were registered in the same period, with a total of 37,161 cases registered in the state from 2014 to 2018. According to HT Correspondent (2018), there was an increase in rape cases and more than 100% increase in kidnapping of women from September 2014 to August 2015. The data revealed a 26% increase in molestation cases between this period and 2018. On the whole, there was a 27% increase in crime against women between 2014–15 and 2017–18. Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal noted that crime did not decrease in districts where women police stations were opened. FIRs registered by police indicated a rising trend: 961 rape cases from August 2014 to September 2015, increasing to 1,026 in 2015–16, 1,193 in 2016–17, and 1,413 in 2017–18. Kidnapping cases also increased from 1,664 in 2014–15 to 3,494 in 2017–18, while molestation cases rose steadily from 1,833 in 2014–15 to 2,320 in 2017–18. However, the Director General of Police stated that the increase in the number of cases against women was because all complaints were converted into cases. With the setting up of women police stations and in compliance with Supreme Court orders on registering First Information Reports (FIRs), there was a surge in the number of cases registered across the state.

1.9 Factors of Below-Par Performance

According to Nikore (2019), a series of audit reports by the Comptroller and Auditor General identified three factors contributing to inefficient implementation of BBBP: inefficient allocation and release of funds at the state level, insufficient monitoring and oversight of community-level activities by district-level task forces, and excessive expenditure on communication-related activities with regard to multi-sector interventions focused on education and health.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research objectives - To find out if the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Initiative has been able to achieve its goals viz-a-viz decreasing crime against women.

2.2 Research methodology – Literature Review of research studies and papers, books and newspaper articles.

3 CONCLUSION

The reviewed literature suggests that a great deal more needs to be done to protect women from violence prevailing in different forms in society. As per the data available on the website of Women and Child Development Department of Haryana, there is a significant difference in the ratio of domestic violence complaints received and complaints resolved. According to data up to September 2024, a total of 4,316 complaints under the Domestic Violence Act were received, of which only 1,157 were resolved. Similarly, 170 complaints were received under the Child Marriage Act, of which only 85 were resolved.

Apart from this, there is no lack of funds to protect women from domestic violence; however, the literature review indicates that funds were not utilized properly or fully. As per the data, a sum of Rs. 220 lakh had been provided in the budget of 2024–25, out of which only Rs. 83.39 lakh was spent up to September 2024, which is affecting the objective of women's empowerment and ensuring the safety of women.

In spite of being well-intentioned, the central objective of the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao initiative to improve CSR in some of the worst-performing districts remained unmet due to ineffective implementation. Though the campaign has been able to increase the sex ratio in many districts, crime against women continues to affect the success of the initiative. Diversion of funds remains a major issue, as funds provided to each district by the Central and state governments were not all utilized for the right purposes, especially in Haryana districts with the worst sex ratios in the country.

As per Saini (2025), almost 19 crimes against women took place in Haryana per day during 2024. The data was shared during the Haryana Vidhan Sabha Session held in March 2025 and indicated a sharp decline of 19.6% in such incidents in 2024 compared to 2023.

According to Pioneer News Service (2026), the Haryana Police claimed that crime against women in Haryana recorded a significant decline of 16.26% in 2025 compared to the previous year, citing positive results from special drives, intensive monitoring, and effective policing.

According to Barua (2018), data manipulation was put into practice to prove the scheme's success. It was found that various districts registered the births of all girls but concealed the number of boys taking birth in order to present an improving sex ratio.

3.1 Recommendations

Barua (2018) recommended a need for a separate mechanism to ensure proper implementation and monitoring of the scheme to fill the widening gaps. The national, state, and district-level task forces should assume overall responsibility for the scheme's implementation at each level and be held accountable for both successes and failures.

According to Shetty (2019), Junaid Ahmed, the World Bank country director for India, suggested adding 'Beti Kamao' to the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao programme, as the country faces a crisis where women are dropping out of the workforce, raising questions about how economic empowerment will be ensured for women.

Arora (2022) concluded that despite bringing much-needed attention to gender discrimination, the BBBP scheme was at risk of failing its central objective due to poor implementation and monitoring. She recommended incentivizing educated females to join schools as teachers to ramp up female enrolment, encouraging female participation in community-led schemes for better implementation, and providing clean and functional toilets in school premises for girls to further boost female enrolment rates.

The literature review indicates a decline in crime against women in Haryana in recent years; however, there remains a need to improve the redressal mechanism for complaints related to violence against women. Additionally, proper and full utilization of funds allocated for women's safety and empowerment should be ensured to achieve the desired goals.

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